upto US$ 100 Million on an annual basis through automatic route without being subject to the three year profitability condition, up from existing limit of US$ 50 million (Budget announcement 2002-03).

27. Indian Companies making overseas investment in joint ventures abroad by market purchases may now do so without prior approval upto 50% of their net worth, up from existing limit of 25% (Budget announcement 2002-03).

28. To induce more investment for R&D activities, aweighted deduction of 125% on the sums paid to any university, college or an institution or a Scientific research association for the purposes of scientific, social or statistical research is available.

29. For reduction of transaction time for export/import clearances, Ministry of Civil Aviation has finalised the scheme of 'Known-Shippers' for doing away with the 24 hours cooling off period.

30. Two shifts have been introduced on week days and single shift on holidays at the Air Cargo Complexes at Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Delhi and Goa.

31. STPI has set up a business support centre in the USA, which is operational since November, 1999, to promote business for STP units and provide marketing support to SMEs.

32. Information Technology Act 2000 dealing with Cyber Security, Cyber Crime and other information security related legal aspects is in place to encourage expansion of e-commerce through internet.

Failure of Communication System at IGI Airport

1917. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN:
SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that telephone system at the Terminal of IGI Airport collapsed on Thursday, the 7th February, 2002 due to

certain snags in the system as a result of which satellite phone to communicate with the Pilots was put into operation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to prevent occurrence of such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Sir, the failure of the phones was not due to snags in the system, but due to optical fiber cuts caused by unknown agencies. However, 105 telephones working at IGI airport which are from Delhi Cantt. Exchange (569 level) on copper pairs were not affected by the breakdown.

(b) FIR has been lodged in Police Station, Vasant Kunj. Apart from this, CGM, MTNL has taken up the matter with Commissioner of Police for detailed investigation. The manholes of optical fibre ducts are being sealed by concrete as a special measure.

Meal charge to MTNL employees

†1918. SHRI MUNAVVAR HASAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the employees of MTNL, Delhi and Mumbai are being paid meal charge in addition to food allowance;

(b) if so, the amount of such charge being paid per day/per month;

(c) the details of the meal charge paid to the employees and officers working under each of the General Manager and the reasons therefor; and

(d) the justification for payment of meal charge in addition to food allowance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Only group 'C' and group 'D' employees of MTNL are paid food allowance at Rs. 225/- per month, per employee. Meal charge is paid to those employees who are

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.